

REMARKS

Applicant requests favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

To place the application in better form, Applicant submits herewith a substitute specification. For the Examiner's convenience, also provided is a marked-up copy of the original specification showing the portions thereof which are being changed. The substitute specification includes the same changes as are indicated in the marked-up copy. Applicant's undersigned attorney has reviewed the substitute specification and submits that the substitute specification contains no new matter.

Claims 1, 3-19, 21-25 and 32 are presented for consideration. Claims 1, 18, 21, 24 and 25 are independent. Claims 26-31 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1, 18, 21, 24, and 25 have been amended to clarify features of the subject invention, while claim 32 has been added to recite additional features of the subject invention. Support for these changes and this claim can be found in the original application, as filed. Therefore, no new matter has been added.

Applicant requests favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action.

Claims 26-29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,690,528 to Tanimoto et al. Applicant submits that this patent does not teach many features of the present invention as previously recited in these claims. Therefore, this rejection is respectfully traversed. Nevertheless, claims 26-29 having been cancelled, this rejection has become moot and should be withdrawn.

Claims 1, 18, 21 and 24-31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,559,584 to Miyaji et al. Claims 1, 3-17, 21, 30 and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,451,507 to Suenaga et al. in view of the Miyaji et al. patent. Claims 18, 19 and 22-25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over this art combination and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,243,377 to Umatate et al. Applicant submits that the cited art, whether taken individually or in combination, does not teach many features of the present invention as recited in these claims. Therefore, these rejections are respectfully traversed. Nevertheless, Applicant submits that independent claims 1, 18, 21, 24 and 25, for example, as presented, amplify the distinctions between the present invention and the cited art.

In one aspect of the invention, independent claim 1 recites an exposure apparatus for exposing a substrate using a plurality of masters. The apparatus includes a stage being able to install at least one of the plurality masters, a first housing surrounding the stage, a second housing for stocking at least one of the plurality of masters, the second housing being installed adjacent to the first housing or installed in an interior of the first housing, and the second housing being allowed to communicate with the first housing, and a third housing installed between an inside space and an outside space of the first housing. The third housing is different from the first and second housings. Also, the first and second housings are filled by an inert gas or are adapted to be evacuated.

In another aspect of the invention, independent claim 18 recites an exposure apparatus for exposing a substrate using a plurality of masters. In yet other aspects of the invention, independent claim 21 recites a semiconductor device manufacturing method, independent claim 24 recites a semiconductor manufacturing factory and independent claim 25 recites a

maintenance method for an exposure apparatus installed in a semiconductor manufacturing factory. These claims recites features along the lines discussed above with respect to independent claim 1.

By such arrangements, the at least one master can be transferred directly from the first housing to the second housing without going into open space, because the second housing is installed adjacent to the first housing or is installed in an interior of the first housing. Further, since the third housing is installed between an inside space and an outside space of the first housing, the master can be transferred from the outside space to the inside space of the first housing independent of the transfer of the master between the first and second housings. Accordingly, the present invention increases the efficiency of the exchange of the master(s).

Applicant submits that the cited art, whether taken individually or in combination, does not teach or suggest such features of the present invention, as recited in independent claims 1, 18, 21, 24 and 25.

The Tanimoto et al. patent discusses a housing that includes a space having what might be called two housings. That patent, however, does not teach or suggest a third housing independent from a second housing in the manner of the present invention recited in the independent claims.

In more detail, in the Tanimoto et al. patent, a reticle is stocked in a reticle storage chamber 484, which is installed between a space (a chamber 460) surrounding a stage and an outside space. A front door 486 of the reticle storage chamber 484 must be opened when the reticle is transferred to the outside space and a rear door of the reticle storage chamber 488 must be opened when the reticle is carried in the reticle storage chamber from the outside space. This arrangement, however, is not desirable because it will cause mixing of the atmosphere of the

chamber 460 and the atmosphere of the outside space due to the opening of the doors 486 and 488, simultaneously. A proper exchange of the reticle cannot always be achieved in the Tanimoto et al. patent.

The Miyaji et al. patent discloses a first space around a stage, a second space stocking a reticle and a third space installed between the first and second spaces. The relative position of the first to third spaces in the device in the Miyaji et al. patent, however, is different from the arrangement of the first to third housings of the present invention. Specifically, in the device in the Miyaji et al. patent, the third space is between the first and second spaces rather than being installed in an inside space and an outside space of the first space, and the second space is not installed adjacent to the first space or is not installed in an interior of the first space. Accordingly, Applicant submits that the Miyaji et al. patent likewise does not teach or suggest the salient features of Applicant's present invention as recited in the independent claims.

The Examiner relies on the Suenaga et al. patent for teaching an exposure apparatus for transferring a predetermined pattern formed on a reticle onto a substrate, which includes a first chamber, a second housing and a third housing. The Examiner relies on the Umatate et al. patent for disclosing plural exposure apparatuses with a host system, a network interface and a computer, with the exposure apparatuses being communicated by a computer network. Applicant submits, however, that the Suenaga et al. patent and the Umatate et al. patent likewise do not teach or suggest the salient features of Applicant's present invention as recited in the independent claims, which have been discussed above. In particular, that art is not read to teach or suggest the arrangement of the first, second and third housings, in the manner of the present invention recited in those independent claims.

For the reasons noted above, Applicant submits that the present invention, as recited in independent claims 1, 18, 21, 24 and 25, is patentably defined over the cited art, whether that art is taken individually or in combination.

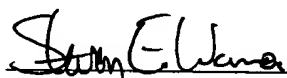
Dependent claims 3-17, 19, 22 and 23 also should be deemed allowable, in their own right, for defining other patentable features of the present invention in addition to those recited in their respective independent claims. Individual consideration of these dependent claims is requested.

Applicant further submits that this Amendment After Final Rejection clearly places this application in condition for allowance. This Amendment was not earlier presented because Applicant believed that the prior Amendment placed the application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of the instant Amendment, as an earnest attempt to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, is requested under 37 CFR 1.116.

Applicant also requests favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early Notice of Allowance of this application.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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